

Why is family engagement important to school improvement and student achievement?

Schools and districts nationwide are recognizing effective family engagement as a key component of school transformation efforts. The increased awareness by school and district leaders has been fueled by the number of federal and state policies that include family engagement as a requisite of school and district reform, and by the growing evidence that points directly at the benefits of family engagement. A synthesis of the research evidence conducted by Henderson & Mapp in 2002, asserts that students with highly engaged families:

- Attend school regularly
- Have stronger social skills
- Earn higher grades
- Graduate from high school
- Go on to college or other postsecondary program

To go along with the research evidence that show that families are central to improving schools and increasing student achievement, is the fact of limited time for instruction and learning in the school setting. Teachers count on a very short supply of instructional time to do all the work needed to ensure students learn and achieve to their highest potential.

Research shows that children spend only 20% of their waking time annually in formal classroom education, leaving 80% of their time to explore and enhance their learning interests in non-school settings. —Harvard Research Project (2014)

Taken together, these two important factors lead us to the need for strong and mutually beneficial family and school partnerships. A new and more successful approach to family engagement is one where families and schools are intentionally and systematically interconnected to meet the monumental responsibility of education children. To transform the way schools and districts collaborate with families requires a new mindset about the nature and purpose of partnerships. It also requires some systemic adjustments that allow for improved capacity and new culture to emerge:

School and district leaders must turn to research and evidence-based engagement practices that are intentionally designed to bring teachers and families together as learners and collaborators. A team approach is at the center of adult learning and family engagement.

School leaders need to provide regular professional learning opportunities that help reshape the hearts and minds of teachers in order to foster meaningful collaboration with families. Families can be our best allies.

The notion of students mastering grade level learning concepts through at home practice must be embedded in the fabric of teaching and learning and be a key component of the school and district improvement plans. With high impact family engagement practices, home can be a rich and stimulating learning environment that supports classroom instruction.

A systemic and integrated approach to family engagement must be established that is linked to learning, developmental, relational and collaborative. The time families spend interacting with teachers and school leaders must yield clear direction for effective ways to engage in supporting student learning.

The APTT Model offers the platform on which to carry out these systemic adjustments.

What is APTT?

Academic Parent Teacher Teams is a family engagement model that supports family and school partnerships to drive student learning and achievement.

The WestEd Academic Parent-Teacher Team (APTT) model of family engagement is a research and evidence-based framework that has transformed the way schools engage families in student learning by aligning grade level learning concepts, student performance data, and family-teacher communication and collaboration.

With APTT the classroom teacher invites families to participate in three 75-minute team meetings, which are held in the fall, winter, and spring (all families are present) and one 30-minute individual session (the student, the teacher, and the student's family).

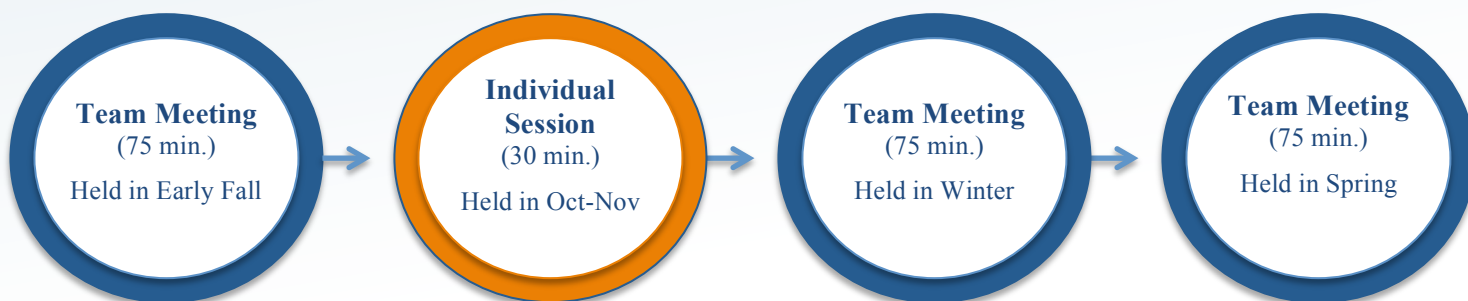
During APTT meetings, teachers share student performance data that are actionable, teach grade-level foundational skills for clear conceptual understanding, and demonstrate concrete activities that families can do at home to help students master the target concepts. The families practice the activities with other families in the class, and each family sets 60-day academic goals for their student.

The goal is for families to go home feeling informed, clear about their role, and committed to improving their child's learning outcomes.

APTT elevates the efforts of traditional parent conferences by expanding opportunities for families and teachers to collaborate regularly and proactively over the course of the school year, while encouraging them to engage and contribute their knowledge and experiences.

Since its development in 2009 by Dr. Maria Paredes, APTT has successfully expanded from nine classrooms in nine schools in Phoenix, Arizona to more than 250 schools and districts in 17 states in 2015, serving over 200,000 families across the nation.

APTT School Year at a Glance



What APTT professional development and support is available to schools and districts?

Successful adoption and implementation of APTT by school leaders and teachers hinges on expert professional development, technical support, and coaching, coupled with access to implementation materials and resources that help support the entire process.

To assist districts and schools, WestEd offers consultation services that support organizational readiness, initial professional development for administrators and teachers and ongoing technical assistance and coaching that build and strengthen staff capacity.

WestEd Service Objectives

1. Build the capacity of teachers to effectively engage families in student grade level learning goals.
2. Build the capacity of families to effectively engage in supporting their child's grade level learning goals.
3. Establish a systematic process for school and family partnerships aligned to school improvement goals.
4. Build the capacity of administrators to grow and sustain effective family engagement practices.

*Gina Incorvaia, APTT School
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The basis of APTT is quite simple, but extremely powerful: when parents, teachers, and students work together with a common focus and expectations, success is within reach.

My training to effectively implement Academic Parent Teacher Teams at Ruth Hill Elementary challenged me to rethink how I defined parent engagement and streamline our efforts as a school to focus on the core business of school, which is to help students to learn, grow, and be successful. The process has helped teachers see parents as partners as they work to mentor and coach parents on how to help their child at home master grade level skills and has helped parents build capacity and understand just how valuable they are in their child's education.

Aaron Corley, Principal

Family and Community Engagement Services

<i>APTT School & District Support</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial professional development for principals and teachers • Ongoing support during teacher planning for APTT meetings • Observations of APTT classrooms coupled with feedback and debriefing sessions • Ongoing technical assistance to school principals and their supporting team • Implementations resources and materials • Data collection and data collection instruments, analysis, and evaluation
<i>APTT Leadership Academy</i>	<p>Cohort Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating school leadership teams include: principal, instructional coach, district representative, lead teacher, family engagement specialist • Provide school leadership teams with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to train and prepare their own school faculty for APTT implementation • Five days of highly interactive professional development over the course of the school year • Observations of APTT classrooms coupled with feedback and debriefing sessions • Ongoing technical assistance to school and district leaders • Data collection, analysis, and evaluation
<i>Webinars & Presentations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining and building effective family and school partnerships • Building school and district readiness for effective partnership with families • Introduction to the APTT Model • Sharing actionable student data with families • Developing families as thought partners in the school improvement process • Strategies for effective family outreach • Embedding family engagement as an essential support for overall school transformation efforts
<i>District Level Family and Community Engagement Services</i>	<p>For District Leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and developing a FACE Department Action Plan • Building research and evidence-based department services • Developing a professional development and support plan for schools, district, and internal FACE department staff • Developing effective community partnerships
<i>Two-Day Family and Community Engagement Institute</i>	<p>For Parent Liaisons, FACE Directors/Coordinators, Counselors, Title I District and School Staff and Community Organizations</p> <p>Establish a strong foundation of family and community engagement that is research and evidence-based</p> <p>Learn about the national Dual Capacity-Building Framework and its application in the school and district environment</p> <p>Prioritize family engagement programs based on impact to student learning</p> <p>Create a family and community engagement action plan that is linked to learning, collaborative, developmental and aligned to school and district improvement</p>

APTT Impact

Recent evidence collected by WestEd and independent evaluation sources indicated the APTT model had positive impact on student achievement, family engagement, teacher efficacy, family efficacy, and teacher-family relationships.

- Improved family-teacher communication
- Increased family support of student learning
- Improved teacher efficacy to engage families in student learning
- Increased student engagement, confidence and learning performance
- Families preferred APTT over traditional conferences

Student Academic Growth



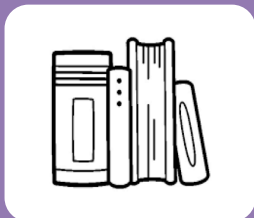
- Students whose families participated in APTT meetings had statistically significant academic performance growth compared to students whose families did not participate in APTT meetings.
- In Creighton School District, Phoenix, Arizona, achievement outcomes for students in English language arts increased by 11% and in mathematics achievement increased by 19% in APTT classrooms. In addition, over 90 percent of parents attended all APTT meetings.
- In Washington, D.C. schools in the second year of APTT implementation, 11.3% composite growth compared to 4.8 DCPS average.
- In Washington DC, schools in year one implementation 6.4% composite growth compared to 3.8 DCPS average.
- In Stockton, California, seven schools receiving School Improvement Grants gained between 8 and 38 API points, placing them at the top of most improved schools in the district.
- In Colorado, Meadow Community School's math scores topped district averages in their 1st year of APTT Implementation.

Family Survey



- 94% of parents were near unanimous in their belief that APT meetings improved how they helped their child with schoolwork.
- 99% of parents said that APTT meetings encouraged them to be more involved.
- 92% of parents said that APTT meetings made them more confident in their ability to support their child's education.

Teacher Survey



- 90% of teachers believed that APTT meetings helped get families more engaged in their children's education and believed that APTTs helped build a relationship with students' families.
- 74% of teachers agreed that APTT meetings have improved the way families support grade level learning goals.
- 70% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that student growth data from APTT foundational grade level skills demonstrates that APTT implementation has improved achievement results for students.